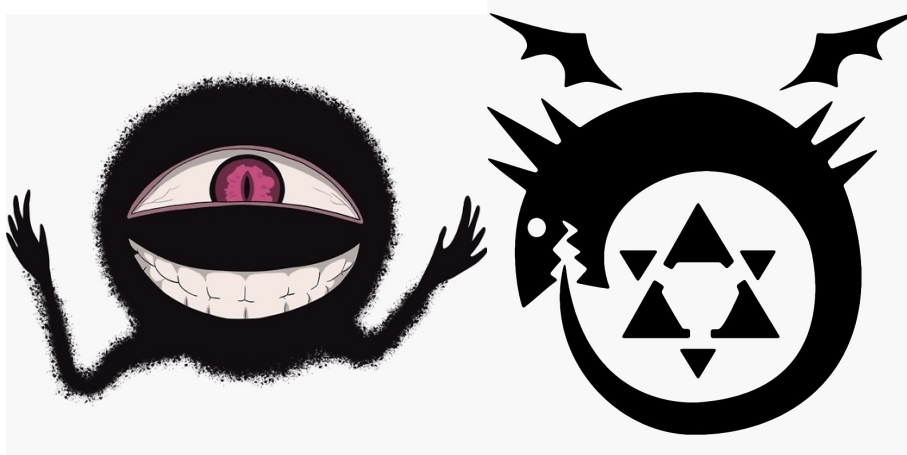Calvin McCormack
October 21, 2024
Music 256A
Stanford University

Reading Response #5

First with the ouroboros, now these instruments' mental models of their users, clearly Fullmetal Alchemist has had an outsize influence on this book.

Wekinator is amazing and has bailed me out on *so many* projects. I watched Rebecca Fiebrink's Kadenze class on using Wekinator four or five years ago; that was the first time I had ever heard about the ChucK programming language, little did I know then…

I had no idea that Macbooks had accelerometers built in! That's really neat, though unfortunately for me the M1 Apple Silicon Macbooks do not, but all intel macs and M2 onwards do 🥲 Given my interest in Indian classical music, I had already dug into Ajay Kapur's work when I read the Creating Music with ChucK textbook last summer (and remain very interested in reading about how he has been able to implement the rules of Indian classical music digitally). However, I had never heard about Spencer Salazar's Auraglyph project, that's a really cool concept. I would love to know if it's still able to run and try it out, it looks like the projects been dormant for four years or so. I see yet another similarity to Fullmetal Alchemist.

Reading through this chapter has taken much longer than usual, not so much because it has a higher page count, but because there are so many interesting projects which I ended up googling and reading about for 10-15 minutes.

One of the most interesting parts of this chapter for me was Perry Cook's assertion that, "my mappings are much simpler than most people would care to acknowledge," and James Landay's following comment that, "it's much easier to come up with isolated interaction techniques…in contrast to designing and building real systems…and evaluating them on real tasks with real users" (Page 246). I think that this point brings up one of the more vexing challenges in designing and developing digital musical interfaces. There are so many great designs that are prototyped and developed, but as often is the case, very few are ultimately produced, and each instrument's user base remains limited. As such, these instruments' repertoire and pedagogy is never able to develop; many are made for a paper or as part of a research project and a few related demonstrations and performances, but never develop past this nascent stage. Feedback from a dedicated user base never materializes, which leads to crucial insights for revisions and improvements never arising. Like many artists and musicians, it seems that the digital musical instrument community as a whole has the age old problem of starting a bunch of projects without ever seeing the old ones through to completion.